

The Father of a Nations

Genesis 12-21

Last week we talked about the tower of babel, where God destroyed the one thing the people put their faith in, so that they realized who they should trust.

- This week God revealed to me a tower that I need to put back under construction.
- And I hope this week God shows you, why he stops the progress of the towers you have been working on.
- (Leads to Abram)
- **Gen12 The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you;**
- People want to build a tower but ² "I will make you into a great nation,
- The people want to reach heaven in their own strength, but I will reach down **and I will bless you;**
- The people want to make a name for themselves but I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." ⁴ **So Abram went, as the Lord had told him.**

What's so special about Abram that God chose him? He was weak, and old, and sterile, and frail. He didn't do anything to deserve this promise. All he did was **comply to the command**.

- 3 words, v4 "So. Abram. Went." That's the only reason he was righteous.

Apply: We don't have to prove or perform anything to be accepted as righteous before God. **God declared you righteous, when you simply comply to his command.**

He calls, and you come, he speaks, and you respond, he directs, and you go.

So Abram went!

-God doesn't request or require anything from you, but one thing... **Faith**.

-Abraham went because of **Faith**.

Hebrews 11 where Paul records the heroes of old, he says, "⁸ **By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.**"

- Right now, a lot of us are living in that sentence of "Even though"
 - "Even though" I can't see the ending, I will keep walking.
 - "Even though" I don't have my life together, I will continue to trust in you.
 - "Even though" I might lose everything, I will obey you.
 - "Even though" I don't know where your leading me, I will go.

So. Abram. went. Righteousness is credited to you when you simply comply to his command.

Through Abram's **Journey of Faith**, you will see that God calls him to live in the "Even though" and to trust that He is in control.

Walk with me on this journey of faith and see how God is calling you to be faithful when you are living in these times of "Even though".

7 Lessons on the Journey of Faith

1. Be ready to give up what you possess, to receive what God promised. Gen

12:1-9

A lot of time when God calls us to follow him, he asks us to leave something behind.

In verse 5, Abram he got to take *“his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.”*

So what did he have to leave behind? His comfort, his lifestyle in Harran, his home.

Apply: When God calls you to receive his promise, most of the time, you have to give up something. whether it's pride, grudge, comfort, friends, dreams, goals. God says I have something better for you, than what you are trying to hold on to.

- **Be ready to give up what you possess, to receive what God promised.**
- Abram obeyed God and so he made Abram into the father of a nation. Don't you know that your obedience doesn't just blesses you, but your future children, don't you care about them?

That's why in verse 7 God showed up and predicts the future of his children.

7 The Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him. About 400 years later, this land became the Promise Land that God gave the descendance of Abram, the Israelites.

- Also, side note, why do we tell ourselves “if I see God, then I will obey him,” while this story clearly shows us that **when we obey him, then he'll appear**.
- **We like to say, “show me and I'll follow you”, Jesus says, “Follow me and I'll show you.”**

Sometimes **doubt** is the thing we **need to give up in order to receive what God has promised us**.

- What do you have to leave behind in order to follow God?

2. Be fearless of the famine and the Pharaoh. Gen 12:10-20

¹⁰Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe.

Now, right away when we see the word “Egypt” you should know it's a bad place. A place that represents sin, a place people run to, to escape hard circumstances. Nothing good comes out of Egypt.

Apply: **We all have an Egypt, a place we run to escape, a place that will enslave us.**

That's why God calls us to trust him “even though” we are in a famine or before a pharaoh. To have faith in the “even though”

Story: While in Egypt Abram was afraid that Pharaoh might kill him and take his wife, Sarai, as his wife. So He lied and said she was his sister. This had the reversal effect and made Pharaoh want to marry Sarai even more, and God had to send down a pledge on Egypt so Pharaoh would let his wife go. (BTW This foreshadows the exodus)

You see, because Abram was fearing the wrong things, it caused a lot of problems. If he had faith in God on the journey. he wouldn't have to fear the famine or the Pharaoh.

Apply: **Be fearless of the famine and the Pharaoh**, if we belong to God than neither people nor circumstances can stand against us. A lot of time it's hard to trust God on the journey become of the fear we use to barricade ourselves.

3. Be willing to fight for peace in your land of problems. Gen 13:5-17; 14:14-16

Story time: After Abram left Egypt, he moved to a land with his nephew Lot. Lot had a lot of people and animals Abram also had a lot of people and animals and this caused a lot of problems.

⁵ Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. ⁶ But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together. (This town not big enough for the both of us) ⁷ And quarreling arose between Abram's herders and Lot's... ⁸ So Abram said to Lot, "Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herders and mine, for we are close relatives."

This is a reminder that on your journey of faith you are going to encounter a lot of family fights. This kingdom4C family fights a lot. But "even though" we get on each other's nerves, "even though" we are a broken family. We fight for peace and for each other. We chose to lift each other's up in prayer, and we serve one another because Jesus has served us.

On this journey we are all walking in one direction, and if there is tension, maybe your being pulled on another direction. But I will choose to say what Abram said in v8, "Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your stuff and mine, for we are close."

Story: Abram brought Lot to a high hill and said, "Every place the light touches is the pride lands, whatever land you chose I will pick the other side." ^{v11} So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. Abram chose the west, the land of Canaan.

Because when fighting for peace, the bigger person makes the sacrifice "even though" it's hard.

Story: God honored Abraham's choices and blessed him for seeking peace with Lot. But later in Ch.14 Lot was in trouble in Sodom and Gomorrah. The people captured him, and Abraham had to go in to recuse him. **At the end of ch14**, God sent a king named Melchizedek from Salem to break bread and wine and bless Abram.

It sounds like a weird random story, but In the NT, book of Hebrew ch7 it says that Melchizedek was Jesus in some kind of way...

Heb7 "This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, ² and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, the name Melchizedek means "king of righteousness"; then also, "king of Salem" means "king of peace." ³ Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever."

This chapter was confusing, but it points to Jesus as the better Melchizedek that broke bread and wine as a promise, that he will bring peace, and reconciliation, between us and God.

Be willing to fight for peace in your land of problems because Jesus has brought peace to you.

4. Be righteous through the covenant that God has credited to you. Gen 15:4-12;17-18

Now in this story Genesis 15, God makes an unbinding covenant with Abram.

Story: When people make an unbinding covenant, they cut animals in half and laid them in a line and 2 people have to walk through its blood to vow that if one of them break the vow than that person deserves to be torn apart like the animals.

But in this covenant, God made Abraham feel asleep (Adam)

Gen15 17 When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. 18 On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram.

So who made this covenant? God and Abraham. Who walked through the fire? God.

So now if one of them breaks the covenant, God alone will be torn apart. He will have to bear the punishment.

Prophet Isaiah points out about the coming Messiah. *“he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.”* The messiah’s body is going to be rip apart and broken in our place, because we have broken the covenant. And through his punishment we can stand before God forgiven and righteous. This is the new covenant.

All we have to do is accept that sacrifice, and Jesus, or Messiah, will bring us under that new covenant. Righteousness will be credited to you.

Ex: It’s like you failed all your test but Jesus got all A’s and gave you his credits, and his scores, in your place. While you pass from his work, he failed under yours. That’s the gospel.

6 Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

Be righteous through the covenant that God has credited to you.

5. Be patient for God’s timing, instead of acting on doubt. Gen 16:1-6

Now so far, we have talked about Abram but not Sarai, can you imagine Abram been promised a son, but Sarai is an old woman that passed menopause. She’s probably freaking out and probably blaming herself. So she came up with a bright idea.

Gen 16. Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; 2 so she said to Abram, “The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her.” Abram agreed to what Sarai said.

Of course, Abram had no problem with listening to Sarai and both of them sinned. He slept with her servant Hagar and she gave birth to Ishmael. Instead of waiting on the lord to do it his way, both of them decided to do it in their own way. Notice how Sarai blamed God for not giving her a son so she took it in her own hands.

Don’t you see that God’s promise through our own strength will lead back to Babel. *perhaps I can build a family through her.* Sarai wants to reach up to God’s promises, and not willing to wait on God’s timing.

Sarai’s doubt led her to make a dumb decision. And that stirred up so many issues.

⁵ Then Sarai said to Abram, “You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the Lord judge between you and me.”⁶ “Your slave is in your hands,” Abram said. “Do with her whatever you think best.” Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.

From this story, we see that acting on doubt leads to suffering, despise, jealousy, judgment, blaming, mistreatment, and abuse.

On your journey of Faith,

- it's tempting to cut corners instead of trusting Jesus,
- it's tempting to do what you think is right in your own eyes instead of trusting in Jesus,
- it's tempting to do things in your own strength instead of trusting in Jesus.
- Its tempting to get with someone, instead of waiting on Jesus.

On your journey of Faith, **we should be patient for God's timing, instead of acting on doubt.**

If God gave a promise, he will provide the power at the right point in time,

God chose Abraham on purpose, to demonstrate His power through Abram's weaknesses.

6. Be obedient to the word of God, reveals true belief. Gen 17:9-11;23-27

So far, God allowed Abram and Sarai to try everything in their own way. Now God is about to do it in his way. And here in chapter 17, God refines his everlasting covenant to Abram. The rule is, before God gives him a child and establish his covenant, he must get circumcised. That's a crazy command to comply, again, God was testing his faith. Will Abram follow through with this covenant or not?

So, I am not exactly sure why God chose this painful process of circumcision for this covenant.

I have an idea, but you have to be mature about this. (Btw if you don't know what circumcision is, you can email me later at keith.nguyen@merck.com)

So one of my thoughts is that, God wants to put a physical mark on the male reproductive organ to indicate that it belongs to him, and through reproduction God will make a great nation out of Abram.

Somehow God's covenant with man always contains the shedding of blood.

Paul later use this imagery of this covenant to teaches us that the blood of Christ has been shed for all and in him we have receive the mark of his people. Now he calls us to put our faith in him and give him our heart to be circumcised. (Rom.2:29 TPT)

29 But you are Jewish because of the inward act of spiritual circumcision—a radical change that lays bare your heart. It's not by the principle of law, but by power of the Holy Spirit.

So now in order to be a part of this covenantal promise he's no longer looking for physical circumcision, he's looking for spiritual heart change. Are you willing to give him your heart? That's obedience.

Being obedient to the word of God, reveals true belief.

Abraham followed through with God's request, because faith requires actions.

James 2:23-24, ²³ **And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. ²⁴ You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone."**

After this, God changed his name from Abram (אַבְרָם) to Abraham (אַבְרָהָם) v5, changed Sarai (סָרַי) to Sarah (שָׂרָה) v15. Now let me ask you what's the difference? In Hebrew he added "AH" which is a part of his name Yahweh (יְהוָה) into to both of their names. Breathing the spirit of life into there lives. Because once you encounter God, he changes who you are. He is now part of your identity.

Now when God promised to make Abraham's name great, whose name is really gloried? Yahweh! So when you truly **believe God**, you will be able to **obey God** and then, that will naturally **change you to be more like God.**

7. Believe that God is able to fulfil where you have failed. Gen 18:1-3;10-15; 21:1-7

Ch18 God waited until Abraham and Sarah have given up on their own strengths and ability so he can prove to them that it is he that will keep this promise. Abraham was 99 years old. Now they have to trust completely on God.

Story: God sent 3 visitors to Abraham and again one of the visitors acts a lot like Jesus and he told Abraham and Sarah that they will have a child in 12 months. Their response was priceless.

Gen18:10 ¹⁰ Then one of them said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son." Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him... ¹² So Sarah laughed to herself ... ¹³ Then the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh... ¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son." ¹⁵ Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, "I did not laugh." But, he said, "Yes, you did laugh."

Even though Sarah failed to trust in God, exactly a year later, as the visitor said, Sarah had a son. It says in Genesis 21:1-7

21 Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised. ² Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. ³ Abraham gave the name Isaac^u to the son Sarah bore him. ⁴ When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. ⁵ Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. ⁶ Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." ⁷ And she added, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

Sometime through our failures God will shows us that only he can fulfill his promises to us. And we have all failed to trust in God, in some ways we have all laughed at his face because we don't believe that he can come through. But "**Even though" we have failed he is still faithful.**

(Heb. 11:10-12)

¹⁰ For Abraham was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. ¹¹ And by faith even though Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. ¹² And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

This points us back to Babel, are you building your tower or looking forward to the city with foundation, whose builder is God? Because if he is your foundation "even though" you have failed, he is still faithful to forgive, and his promises are still yes and amen!

Believe that God is able to fulfil where you have failed.

Invitation

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going."

- How are you doing on your journey of faith?
 - If you are doing well, let me encourage you to keep going with these 7 lessons from Abraham.
 - If you have NOT been faithful, I encourage you to also keep going with these 7 lessons from Abraham.
 - And if you have never put your faith in Jesus before, I invite you to start this journey of faith. Gospel* Trust God in the moments of "Even Though"